

Integrative Pain Management Initiative (FY02-2115)

Impact

The Integrative Pain Management Initiative was successful in stimulating interest in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) at a large Medical Center. This initiative also boosted the use of CAM in primary care.

Description

Over one-third of the patient population at Medical Center was seeking care for control of pain. Since JCAHO now requires that all patients be screened for pain, this number is anticipated to grow in the future. Chronic pain patients also routinely seek care more often than non-pain patients. The purpose of this initiative was to improve the outcomes of pain management for patients with a diagnosis of chronic pain (pain > 6 months duration) that failed to respond to conventional medical treatment. The initiative increased patient awareness and understanding of health promotion topics such as massage, yoga, and nutrition, and taught patients to make simple changes to help enhance the management of chronic pain. The ultimate goal of the six-week program was to reduce the demand for healthcare services for non-urgent, self-treatable pain while also decreasing lost duty/work time.

Outcomes

- Eighty-six percent of participants completed the program. Of those patients with high utilization rates (3 months) prior to entering the program, utilization rates (3 months after program completion) decreased by 57%.
- Response to the program was much better than anticipated, with numerous referrals from physicians and self-referrals from patients to enroll in the program. The overall attendance rate was good and the participation of support persons (spouses, children, friends) was also very high (average of 60-70% per class).
- Guidelines for CAM modalities were developed.
- Patients requesting CAM increased significantly. This increase prompted the hospital to send several physicians to certificate programs in CAM therapies so the hospital could offer these alternative modalities.

Innovative Features

This initiative offered a holistic approach to pain by integrating traditional forms of pain management with complimentary and alternative therapies to optimize patient outcomes and maintain continuity of care.

Lesson Learned

- Asking for volunteers is an excellent way to make up for a shortfall in resources. One of the major highlights from this initiative was the number of personnel who volunteered their time to help with the project.